

Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 10, Part I: “From Below Upwards & Above Downwards”; Chapter 17 §3: “Truth of Interpretation”

[0:00]

- Regarding the notion of truth – a notion, not an idea or a concept or a cultural tradition about truth.
- People already *have* a notion of truth – that truth is when what a person says is really so.
- But we cannot “look” at reality to see if it corresponds to what we say; our ideas about the real are always mediated; they never immediately access the real; hence the need for reasonable reflection.
- “Truth is implicit in the discussion of the notion of being, because the only reasonable affirmation is true affirmation, and truth is the relation between knowing and being. (575)
- Making explicit what is only implicit in this section: in God the knowing and the known are *identical*, so Truth is God
- For humans, truths are *correspondences* between the knowing and being.
- Discussion of the criticisms of some correspondence theories of truth
- Lonergan’s brief discussion of truth needs elaboration in relation to other theories of truth

[9:32]

- Return to a topic remaining from the previous class:
- “Two dynamisms” – the dynamism of the unrestricted desire, and the dynamism of unconditional love.
 - One a movement from below upwards, the other a movement from above downwards
- The dynamisms move us beyond anything we have attained so far.
- The desire to know, value and love moves us toward ever further insights, judgments of fact and value, decisions and acts of loving.
- Unconditional love is a principle – a source of further activities – of new decisions, new judgments of fact and value, new insights, new experiences.
- No proof that this second dynamism or principle is the source of conscious acts; Lonergan puts it forth for consideration by the self-appropriating subject.
- This is the only “proof” that there is a second dynamism (or the first, for that matter)

[23:19]

- Loving is the source of acts of valuing.
- Acts of believing (whether of judgments of fact or value) come out of our valuing
- Believing can be prior to understanding, and give rise to acts of understanding what one first believes is inspired by loving and valuing.
 - New acts of understanding can help us experience things we would not otherwise notice
 - This is the dynamism of love, from above downward, as a source of further conscious acts.

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- Only insofar as love is truly unrestricted does it make sense to speak of *knowledge* as born of love.
- Faith: Knowledge of fact and knowledge of value can be born of love
- People in love are often very biased; but this is not truly unconditional love. It is an extremely limited, narcissistic love.
- Genuine love of a person or a community is a participation in unconditional love; it is not jingoism.

[31:02]

- Student question of whether true love is a way to break bias.
 - Yes. Lonergan elaborates this in his essay “Healing and Creating in History.”
 - Max Scheler in his book *Ressentiment* [a reply to Nietzsche] discusses how love can reverse resentment.

- Common sense is not up to the challenge of overcoming general bias. Something from outside is needed, and that something is the dynamic from above downward that proceeds from unconditional love.

[36:40]

- Student question about whether the upward and downward movements are simultaneous or alternative ways of knowing.
 - These movements are different from the scissors metaphor that Lonergan uses in the case of the scientific methods.
 - In the scissors metaphor, the upper blade comes from prior intellectual achievements.
 - The dynamism from above downward that is guided by love, on the other hand, does not depend upon prior intellectual achievements. It will use intellectual achievements to give further guidance and clarification, but does not primarily depend upon these.
 - Yet the insights and judgments that proceed from above downward will be the same as from below upward, provided the realm in question is proportionate being.

[42:57]

- Student question about whether going along with something that a beloved loves (e.g., hockey) out of love for them is enough, or whether one also has to come to love what they love.
 - One comes to love what the beloved values out of that love.
 - Analogously, out of love of God, one can come to love all that God loves – which is the love of everything about everything.
- Religious traditions bequeath good insights and judgments that help comprehend religious experience.

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- Student question about how the movement from above downward affects the levels of systems.
 - The way Lonergan speaks of higher integrations of lower levels of events is does hold when one gets to the level of unconditional being in love – there is some sort of higher integration that takes place. Although it is different in some ways.

[50:19]

- Student questions about religious development as dialectical – authenticity and inauthenticity as the tension between the self-as-transcending and the self-as-transcended. Whether self-surrender is *to* the self, or *of* the self.
 - The self-as-transcended is not necessarily inauthentic. It is the self up until the present, constituted by the experiences, insights, judgments, decisions one has made so far.
 - But there is a strong desire to stay that way, and a strong fear of giving up what one has made of oneself so far. A strong resistance against self-surrender.
 - Inauthenticity is giving in to that resistance and refusing self-surrender in response to love or to the desire to understand, know, value, decide more.

[59:49]

- Further question about what is meant by self-surrender – what giving it up to?
 - The problem is that this is unknown at the moment of the decision of self-surrender.
 - Example of college students who have to give up dreams that for careers that they had when coming to college. Sometimes giving up one's own dreams for the sake of the dreams of a beloved.
 - Does God compromise as human lovers do? The very being of God is self-surrender, according to most world religions.

[1:06:08]

- Lonergan on Interpretation in *Insight*
- He will claim that the method of metaphysics holds the key to interpretation
- Just as the method of metaphysics anticipates the distortions that produce a dialectic in the history of metaphysics, so also he regards his method of interpretation (hermeneutics) as based in his metaphysics as capable of dealing with the distortions of meaning and problems of interpretation that permeate the history of human meanings.

[1:08:18]

- First among the problems of interpretation is that of relativism.
- What is meant by “relativism” in interpretation?
 - Discussion – individual and cultural relativism; whether there is any objective standard for interpretation.
 - Thomas Kuhn moved the problem of relativism from interpretation in the humanities into the realm of the natural sciences as well.
 - These are different from the relativism due to biases
- Lonergan claims that, under proper conditions, objective interpretation is possible.

[1:16:29]

- Lonergan’s response to the problem of relativism in interpretation is his “universal viewpoint”
- Method of interpretation as having to do with discovering significance of an expression that goes beyond the horizon of the one who articulated the expression.
- Interpretation as a creative activity that brings forward meanings that the originator of a text might not recognize.
- Interpretation understands history as better than it really was. [The converted person operating in the functional specialty, Dialectics, “develop positions and reverses counter-positions, [and] will be presenting an idealized version of the past, something better than was the reality,” *Method in Theology*, 251).
- “Explanatory (or scientific) interpretation” does this by situating expressions of meaning in the context of sequences of genetic developments and dialectical reversals.

[1:24:36]

- Student question about whether interpretation “reads too much into the text” instead of what the author really intended
 - Ambiguity of what the author “really intended.” In every act of meaning, humans intend beyond the finitude of that act.
 - The ideal of what is “really intended *in* the text” can be under the influence of the counter-position of the already-out-there-now conception of meaning
 - A human meaning is never just static; it is always already on the way to richer meaning or more decadent meaning – or both at the same time in different ways.
 - Modern methods of interpretation (Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, post-modern) bring to light important dynamics of meaning; but they can also become monolithic and obscure the richness of meaning.

[1:32:30]

- Student question about Lonergan’s “ultimate viewpoint”
 - Corrective regarding the difference between an “ultimate viewpoint” vs. Lonergan’s “universal viewpoint.”

- The limited universal viewpoint is only heuristic. Not a complete account of all meaning; rather, a structured anticipation of all meanings.
- Further question: Is the ground of the universal viewpoint the unrestricted desire to know or unconditional love?
- Lonergan does not spell out the way unconditional love can be the ground of a universal viewpoint until *Method in Theology*. Briefly discussed.
- In *Insight*, however, Lonergan attempts to work out the universal viewpoint solely on the basis of the first dynamism of the unrestricted desire to know.

[1:35:25]

- Student question about whether the quest for the historical Jesus was a motivating factor in Lonergan's thought about interpretation.
 - The quest for the historical Jesus was only part of a larger set of issues of history and theology that motivated Lonergan.

End of Part I.